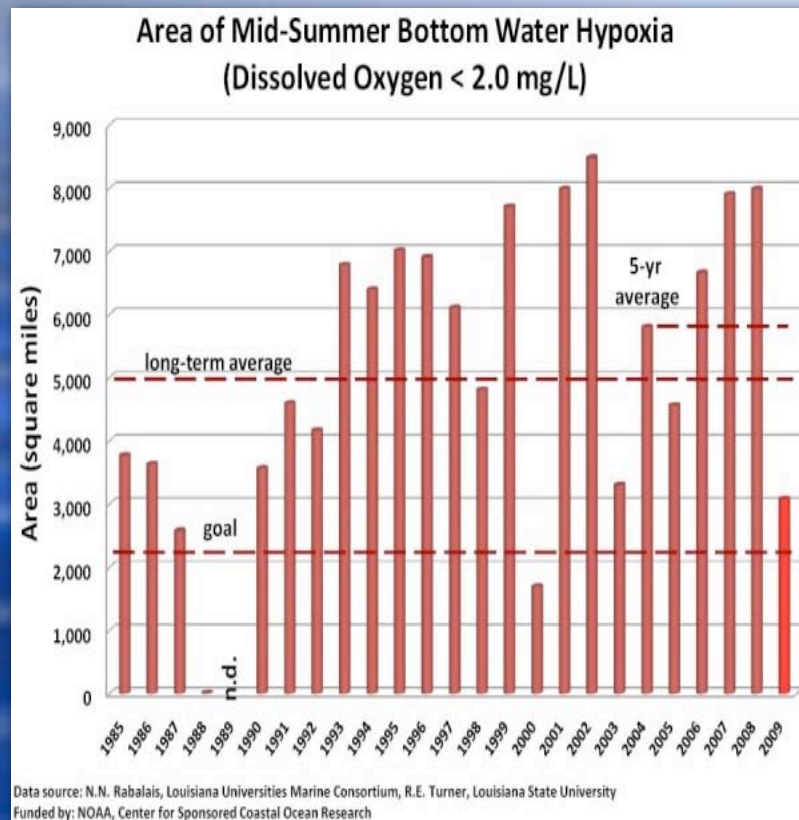


MISSISSIPPI RIVER GULF OF MEXICO WATERSHED NUTRIENT TASK FORCE

18th PUBLIC MEETING
DES MOINES IOWA

Remarks by Craig Cox
Environmental Working Group

Starting Point

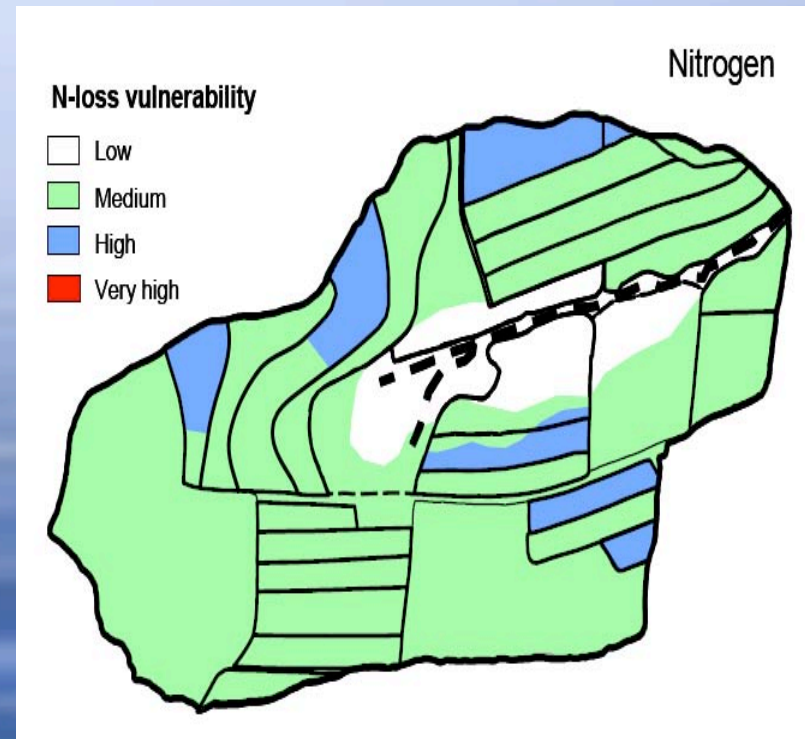
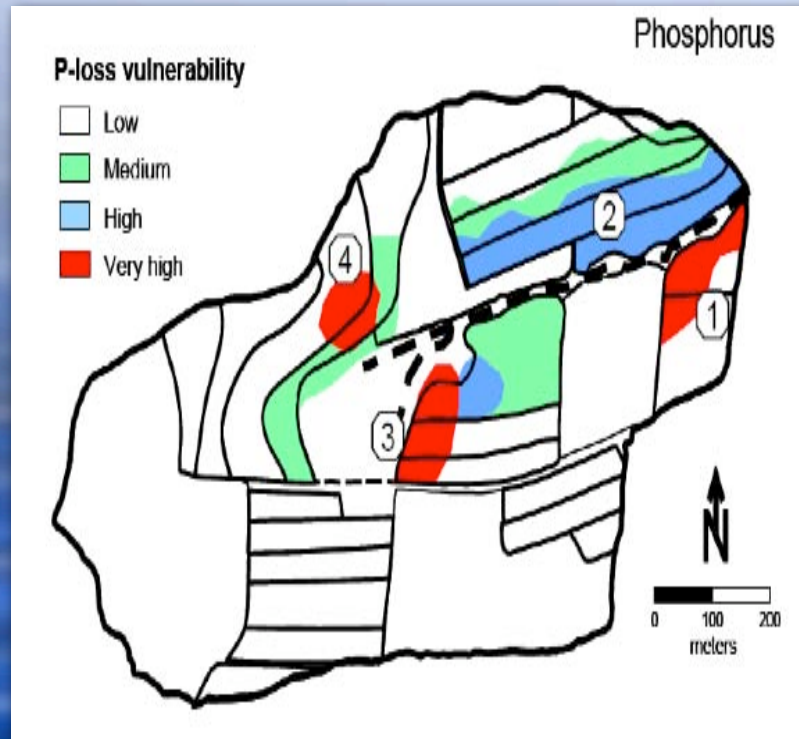


- ◆ We aren't getting the results we need.
- ◆ Reducing pollution from agriculture is critical.
- ◆ The problem is policy, not technology.
- ◆ Stakes are getting higher.

Business as Usual Won't Get It Done

- ◆ Focus voluntary programs to get results.
 - ◆ Priority watersheds.
 - ◆ Precision conservation.
- ◆ Regulations that work in agriculture.
 - ◆ Carrots with strings.
 - ◆ Precision regulation.
- ◆ Technical and scientific network.

Precision Conservation in Priority Watersheds



- ◆ Right practices in the right places for maximum effect.
- ◆ Most program funds must go to watershed water quality projects to harness precision conservation.

Precision Conservation in Priority Watersheds

- ◆ Dozen's of studies going back decades argue for focusing funding, but...
 - ◆ Most program dollars are still too broadly dispersed to get water quality results.
 - ◆ Watershed water quality projects get a lot of attention as success stories, but a small share of the money.
- ◆ Political expediency?
 - ◆ Positive politics of targeting: solve pressing problems that matter to constituents.
 - ◆ Failure is good politics?

Precision Conservation in Priority Watersheds

- ◆ Bright Spots:
 - ◆ Iowa CREP treatment wetlands.
 - ◆ Drainage and Wetland Landscape Systems Initiative.
 - ◆ Iowa watershed project grants.
 - ◆ Iowa Soybean Association On-Farm Network and Environmental Program.
 - ◆ NRCS Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative.
- ◆ Very promising but...
 - ◆ Bring pieces together on the ground?
 - ◆ Bring to scale quickly enough?

Voluntary Programs Alone Not Enough

- ◆ Inherent weaknesses of voluntary programs:
 - ◆ Producers who volunteer not necessarily the ones who can make the most difference.
 - ◆ Producers' priorities may differ from program priorities especially if they are picking up part of the tab.
 - ◆ Concerns about equity and equal access loom large when distributing government money; a serious barrier to effective targeting.
- ◆ It takes heroic effort to overcome these weaknesses and our track record is sobering.

Just a Few Sore Spots Defeat a Lot of Voluntary Effort



Regulation that Works

- ◆ “We can’t expect taxpayers to pay for everything.”
- ◆ “Agriculture is going to need a speed limit.”
- ◆ Regulation that works in agriculture:
 - ◆ Carrots with Strings: Conservation Compliance.
 - ◆ Precision Regulation: Restrict particularly risky practices in vulnerable locations.
 - ◆ Manure on frozen/snow-covered ground.
 - ◆ Set back crop production from waterways.
 - ◆ Unrestricted and unmanaged access of livestock to streams.

Regulation that Works

- ◆ Objective is to:
 - ◆ Socially acceptable answer: what should taxpayers pay for and what should producers be expected to do on their own.
 - ◆ Affect the least number of producers needed to achieve the greatest improvement in water quality.
 - ◆ Push the right producer's into voluntary programs.

Technical Assistance and Scientific Support



We Can Solve the Problem

- ◆ Act with a sense of urgency.
- ◆ Focus voluntary programs.
- ◆ Put Regulations in Place that work in agriculture.
- ◆ Build Our Technical Assistance and Scientific Support Network.

Thank You And Good Luck

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